Pastoral Relations:

Community of Faith

January 2019

Pastoral Relations
Relations pastorales
The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Pastoral Relations: Community of Faith (January 2019)

Gratitude: The production of this resource and the new pastoral relations process has been assisted by the testing of the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships projects across many Conferences. We are grateful for the print and online resources from the test Conferences, which have contributed to some of the material in this resource.

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About This Resource

This resource expands on the policy found under I. Pastoral Relations in *The Manual*. It is specifically for communities of faith that are starting, changing, or ending a pastoral relationship.

This resource contains

- policy and procedures that must be followed
- best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice on the recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures, which you are encouraged, but not required, to follow

This is one in a series to guide the church in the area of pastoral relations. Other resources in this series are as follows:

- *Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel*
- *Pastoral Relations: Supporting the Pastoral Relationship*
- *Pastoral Relations: Regional Council Liaisons*
- *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*

Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith is a companion to this resource. It provides additional tools for a community of faith in the pastoral relations process, including sample bulletin inserts about pastoral relations, worksheets for the community of faith profile, sample interview questions, and worksheets for the search team.

As of January 2019, these new pastoral relations resources, available on www.united-church.ca, replace *Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting* (March 2015).

For more information about pastoral relations, including whom to contact, please visit www.united-church.ca/leadership/supporting-ministry/pastoral-relations.

What Is Pastoral Relations Policy?

"Ordered ministers and designated lay ministers while in paid accountable ministry positions are office holders within The United Church of Canada. While there may be elements similar to employment, the essential nature of the relationship is a covenant."
—Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada (2012)

The special status of ministry personnel requires the church to write policy that governs the paid accountable ministry relationship between ministry personnel and communities of faith. The policy that governs this relationship is pastoral relations policy.

Pastoral relations policy governs search, selection, calls, and appointments between ministry personnel and communities of faith within The United Church of Canada. Pastoral relations policy is set by the General Council and implemented cooperatively by communities of faith and regional councils.

Theological Grounding

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.
For the sake of the world,
God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry. (A Song of Faith)

In the church,
some are called to specific ministries of leadership,
both lay and ordered;
some witness to the good news;
some uphold the art of worship;
some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;
some build up the community of wisdom;
some stand with the oppressed and work for justice. (A Song of Faith)

A community of faith, like any community, changes.
When a minister comes into a community of faith
a covenant is made; a promise to walk together as God's people,
deepening our commitment to Jesus Christ
and growing closer to God.
God's covenant with us never changes,
but our covenants with one another do change.
(Adapted from the *Book of Worship*, United Church of Christ © 1986, United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, New York, New York. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

To embody God's love in the world,
the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship
of all believers. (A Song of Faith)

Manual Policy—What Has Changed

The 43rd General Council 2018 made the following changes to pastoral relations policy:

1. **The definition of covenant is expanded beyond three parties.**

A covenant is now defined as follows (*The Manual, 2019*, section I.1):

> A "covenant" is between God, the ministry personnel, the community of faith or other ministry, and the wider United Church as represented by the regional council. The covenant may include other parties that are integral to living out the gospel in community as God calls us.
>
> An "other ministry" may be the General Council, a regional council, or a ministry that is not accountable to the United Church.
>
> A covenant with a community of faith is established by call or appointment. It creates a pastoral relationship and is governed by [pastoral relations policies].
>
> A covenant with another ministry is governed by the human resource policies of the other ministry.

2. **The needs assessment process is replaced with the use of profiles of ministry personnel and profiles of communities of faith.**

Each community of faith within The United Church of Canada is responsible for preparing a community of faith profile. A community of faith that has completed and filed a profile with the regional council may issue a call or appointment.

Each ministry personnel is responsible for preparing and filing a ministry personnel profile. A member of the order of ministry with a profile may accept a call or appointment. A designated lay minister with a profile may accept an appointment.

3. **The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for some pastoral relations actions and decisions that were previously the responsibility of a congregation.**

Specifically, the governing body of the community of faith is responsible for the following:

- *decisions about supply appointments*

The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for requesting regional council approval for supply appointments.

> Supply appointments are defined in *The Manual* at section I.1.8.

- *preparing the community of faith profile (replaces needs assessment)*

It is the responsibility of the governing body of the community of faith to ensure the community of faith's profile is completed and that a community of faith meeting is called to recommend the profile. The governing body is responsible to ensure that the profile is filed to meet pastoral relations requirements. The regional council is responsible for approving the community of faith profile.

- *notifying the regional council of any proposed change in covenant, and to request a liaison*

If a meeting of the community of faith is called to consider a change in pastoral relations, either to end the pastoral relationship or to make a change to terms of the pastoral relationship, the governing body is responsible to notify the regional council and request a liaison from the regional council.

4. **The presbytery representative role is replaced with a regional council liaison as the regional council representative to communities of faith for pastoral relations/covenant processes.**

A regional council liaison is meant to offer supportive and consistent accompaniment to the community of faith throughout a change in pastoral relations.

The regional council is responsible for

- training regional council liaisons
- ensuring that the community of faith profile meets the purpose of the community profile and contains the required elements and optional elements, where applicable and as outlined in these policies
- training the search team before interviews start
- determining where support will be offered by a regional council liaison and where support will be offered by regional council staff

5. **ChurchHub (ChurchHub.ca) is established and regularized as the required process for ministry personnel and communities of faith to search for calls and appointments. The United Church of Canada will support the Indigenous Church in being self-determining in whether or how they use the ChurchHub.**

Additional Policies for Communities of Faith: Changing a Pastoral Relationship

This section is **required procedural policy** for communities of faith that are experiencing a change in pastoral relations. The related *Manual* policy may be found in *The Manual*, I. Pastoral Relations, sections I.1. Connecting and I.3. Disengaging.

There are four stages of changing a pastoral relationship:

1. Request a change to the pastoral relationship;
2. Update and file a community of faith profile;
3. Search and selection; and
4. Covenant through worship.

Change to the Pastoral Relationship

A change to the pastoral relationship may be requested by the ministry personnel, the community of faith, or the regional council.

A change to the pastoral relationship may be a request to change the terms of the call or appointment or a request to end the pastoral relationship.

Regional Council Support

The regional council is responsible for support through the pastoral relations process.

All regional councils have trained members, called regional council liaisons, who are called to this work on the part of the regional council. The regional councils also have paid accountable staff—regional council ministers—who support the pastoral relations process and pastoral relationships. It is the regional council's responsibility to decide what support a community of faith and ministry personnel need, and to send that support. Ministry personnel are also supported by the Office of Vocation when making a change in pastoral relations.

A community of faith will, at minimum, touch base with the liaison at the following times in their process:

- for any discussion about the pastoral relationship;
- any time support is needed to explore a living faith story, whether or not the community of faith is experiencing a change in pastoral relations;
- when a change in pastoral relations has been requested;
- when the community of faith begins writing their profile;
- when the community of faith is ready to post their profile;
- when a search team is appointed;
- when the governing body requests a meeting of the community of faith to hear the recommendation of the search team; and
- at the covenanting service.

Change to the Terms of the Call or Appointment

Is a community of faith profile always needed?

No, a request to change the terms of a call or appointment may be made without a community of faith profile if the ministry personnel, community of faith, and regional council are in mutual agreement with the change.

The ministry personnel, community of faith, or regional council may request an updated position description as part of the negotiation of new terms of call or appointment.

When is a community of faith profile needed?

A community of faith profile is needed when a community of faith is requesting a new ministry personnel position, requesting the end of a pastoral relationship, or requesting a change in terms of a call or appointment without the agreement of the ministry personnel.

A search team may not begin a search without a complete profile.

Ministry Personnel Requests a Change in Pastoral Relationship

How does a ministry personnel request a *change* to their current call or appointment?

If a ministry personnel requests a change to the terms of the call or appointment, the ministry personnel is responsible for

- writing a letter to the governing body of the community of faith and the regional council, notifying both councils of the request for a change in terms; and
- negotiating the new terms of call or appointment with the community of faith and the regional council.

Negotiating New Terms of Call or Appointment

In a pastoral charge, this negotiation takes place between the ministry personnel, a representative from the community of faith Ministry and Personnel Committee, a member of the governing body, and the regional council liaison.

In a community of faith that is not a pastoral charge, the negotiation takes place between the ministry personnel, a representative from the community of faith, and the regional council liaison. If there is a Ministry and Personnel Committee or a Human Resources Committee, a representative from that committee should be present as well.

▪ The governing body is responsible to call a meeting of the community of faith to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
▪ The community of faith is responsible to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
▪ The regional council is responsible to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.

How does a ministry personnel request an *end* to their call or appointment?

If a ministry personnel requests an end to a call or appointment, the ministry personnel is responsible to write a letter notifying the following parties of the request to end the pastoral relationship, including a proposed date for the change to take effect:

- to the community of faith, addressed to the chair of the governing body;
- to the regional council, addressed to the secretary of the regional council; and
- to the Office of Vocation, addressed to the Office of Vocation, General Council Office.

The ministry personnel must give at least 90 days' notice of the change in pastoral relationship.

The regional council is responsible to approve the request for a change in pastoral relationship. The regional council must also make a decision on the proposed date for the change to take effect.

If the proposed date is less than 90 days after the community of faith received the request, the community of faith must also approve the date.

Community of Faith Requests a Change in Pastoral Relationship

How does a community of faith request a *change* to the current call or appointment?

If the community of faith requests a change to the terms of the current call or appointment, the community of faith is responsible for

- writing a letter to the ministry personnel and the regional council, notifying both of the request for a change in terms; and
- negotiating the new terms of call or appointment with the ministry personnel, the governing body, and the regional council.

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▪ The governing body is responsible to call a meeting of the community of faith to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
▪ The community of faith is responsible to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.
▪ The regional council is responsible to decide whether to approve the change to the terms of call or appointment.

If the ministry personnel does not approve the change in terms of call or appointment, the changes may be made by preparing and filing a community of faith profile, as described below and in *The Manual*, section I.3.1.6.

How does a community of faith request an *end* to the pastoral relationship?

If the community of faith requests an end to the pastoral relationship, the governing body of the community of faith is responsible for

- ensuring that the request for the meeting to consider the pastoral relationship meets the requirements of *The Manual*, section B.5.3;
- writing a letter to the ministry personnel, notifying them of the request for the meeting, the meeting date, and the ministry personnel's right to respond to the request to end the pastoral relationship at the meeting;
- writing a letter to the regional council, notifying them of the request for the meeting, and requesting a regional council liaison; and
- reading notice of the meeting during Sunday worship, according to *The Manual*, section B.5.4.2 a.

The regional council is responsible for

- setting a date for the requested meeting and informing the person calling the meeting of the date;
- sending a representative—a regional council liaison or regional council staff—to attend the meeting of the community of faith to consider the request for a change in covenant; and
- deciding on the request for a change in pastoral relationship and notifying the Office of Vocation about any decision.

The governing body of the community of faith is responsible for informing the ministry personnel serving the community of faith of the upcoming meeting. The ministry personnel must be given the opportunity to be present and respond at it (see *The Manual*, section I.3.1.5).

If the community of faith approves the request for change in pastoral relationship, the regional council is responsible for deciding on the request for change (and its terms) and for notifying the Office of Vocation (see *The Manual*, section I.3.1.6 h).

The community of faith is responsible for giving the ministry personnel 90 days' notice or paying salary in lieu of 90 days' notice.

> The representative from the regional council may attend in person, by telephone conference, or video conference.

Regional Council Ends the Pastoral Relationship

How does the regional council end a current call or appointment?

If the Board of Vocation has made a decision to place the minister's name on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary), it informs the regional council that the minister is no longer eligible to serve in a call or appointment so that the regional council may end the pastoral relationship. The regional council is responsible to notify the ministry personnel and the community of faith of the ending of the pastoral relationship.

Community of Faith ChurchHub Page

Each community of faith in The United Church of Canada will have an online community of faith page at ChurchHub.ca that they are responsible to maintain.

The General Council will populate all community of faith profiles with basic information, similar to what is now included online on the church locator on www.united-church.ca. Basic information includes the following:

- name;
- address;
- phone number; and
- e-mail address.

The community of faith may update the basic information at any time. It is the responsibility of the community of faith to determine who has access to the profile and who will manage the profile.

Other information will be available and updated through a community of faith's Church Hub page, including the following:

- *Year Book* statistics (the blue forms); and
- the regional self-assessment form.

Community of Faith Profile

When a community of faith is experiencing a change in pastoral relations, its profile needs to be updated.

A community of faith may update its profile at any time, even when it is not experiencing a change in pastoral relations, if the community is in need of programmatic or other support from the regional council.

The governing body is responsible to request a regional council liaison to support the process of completing the community of faith profile. The liaison works with the governing body to ensure that the profile has all of the required elements and meets the purpose before it is filed.

The governing body is responsible for preparing the profile, including the living faith story. The purpose of the community of faith profile is

- to articulate the community of faith's witness to the gospel;
- to articulate the ministry needs of the community of faith; and
- to summarize the community of faith's resources and community context.

The purpose of the community of faith profile may be achieved by the completion and compilation of the elements of the profile. A community of faith profile that is ready to post for search and selection must include the following:

- living faith story;
- demographics;
- financial viability;
- real property;
- position description(s);
- manse report, if applicable; and
- learning site requirements, if applicable.

At the point of posting the profile to ChurchHub, filters will need to be selected that match the profile and assist ministers in searching for the community of faith profile, as follows:

- regional availability—regional council 1–16;
- hours—full-time or part-time;
- start date;
- manse;
- Supervised Ministry Education site;
- solo or team ministry;
- urban, suburban, or rural;
- ethnocultural or linguistic specific community of faith;
- Indigenous community of faith; and
- Affirming community of faith.

This work may be divided up in any way that suits the community of faith. The governing body may prepare the profile or appoint a team to prepare the profile, or the whole community of faith may participate in preparing the profile.

The regional council is responsible to

- ensure that the community of faith profile meets the purpose of the profile and contains the required elements and optional elements, where applicable and as outlined in these policies;
- provide a regional council liaison to support the community of faith's process; and
- determine where support will be offered by a regional council liaison and where support will be offered by regional council staff.

A living faith story and the other elements of a community of faith profile may point to any number of outcomes, such as a lay-led congregation, amalgamation or disbanding of the pastoral charge, or some new innovative ministry. A profile may recommend a new pastoral relationship or a change in terms of a call or appointment. The community of faith may discern that it is called to be a Supervised Ministry Education site for candidates for ministry, or that it would like to be a partner with a community outreach project.

A number of resources are available from the General Council and regional council offices that may be used to tell a church's living faith story; these are listed in the best practices section of this resource.

Search and Selection

A search process may begin once a community of faith profile is completed and filed on ChurchHub.ca.

The governing body is responsible for naming a search team. This may be the same group of people who put together the profile, including the living faith story, or it may be a different group. Depending on the church size and context, the governing body may be able to take on this role, or it may be done by the whole congregation.

The regional council is responsible for training the search team. The search team begins holding interviews only once its members have been trained by the regional council.

Ministry personnel profiles are also posted to ChurchHub. Only communities of faith that are in a search process may see profiles of ministry personnel who are in search of call or appointment.

Confidentiality in the Search Process

The reason that only churches that are in search may see ministry person profiles is to maintain a level of confidentiality in the search process. Members of search teams must agree to keep the search process confidential. Privacy, confidentiality, and transparency are essential for building trust. Secrecy, on the other hand, will impede trust.

Privacy belongs to one individual only. Most people are aware of the importance of respecting the right to privacy, that is, honouring an individual’s control over how and with whom personal information can be shared. This right is protected by Canadian law in the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

Confidentiality means ensuring that information gained in private discussion is not disclosed to others inappropriately or used out of context. In order to maintain trust and the integrity of a process, it can be necessary to withhold some information. Confidentiality is a required condition for participants of certain groups to ensure that what is said in the group stays in the group. This enables people to speak freely about private or controversial issues without being held to account beyond the group and context where the words are spoken.

Transparency means that methods and procedures are clear and open and can be questioned. It operates on the democratic principle that people have a right to know about the systems that affect their well-being. It means that people will know and have a say in how information is used, who sees it, and how it fits into the larger picture. It supports the principle of keeping a community of faith well informed about the pastoral relations work.

Secrecy is the opposite of transparency. It is the condition of withholding information for the purpose of control. It is a situation in which only a few initiates are privy to certain information and everyone else is excluded, whether or not the information could potentially affect them. When people suspect, rightly or wrongly, that a few “insiders” are making decisions for others, mistrust can take hold.

The search team is responsible for

- using ChurchHub to search for ministry personnel profiles that complement the community of faith profile, in whole or in part;
- creating a short list of ministry personnel to interview, and inviting the ministers to an interview;
- completing first-round interviews and shortlisting for second-round interviews;
- holding reference checks for the ministry personnel who are moving to second-round interviews;
- holding second-round interviews;
- discerning through conversation and prayer a decision about a successful applicant;
- contacting the successful applicant and beginning negotiations;
- communicating to the ministry personnel who were not successful after the date for the community of faith meeting has been set;
- extending a call or appointment to the successful applicant; and
- making a recommendation, including negotiated terms for the call or appointment, to the community of faith.

The successful applicant is given the opportunity to confirm the invitation.

The governing body is responsible to

- request a meeting of the community of faith to consider the recommendation of the search team.

The regional council is responsible to

- attend the meeting via a representative, usually the liaison who has walked with the community of faith during the writing of their profile and their search process. The regional council representative may attend in person, by telephone, or electronically; and
- decide whether to approve the call or appointment.

Covenanting Service

At the beginning of every new call or appointment, a covenanting or installation service is held to celebrate the new pastoral relationship that has been established.

A covenant is between God, the ministry personnel, the community of faith or other ministry, and the wider United Church as represented by the regional council. The covenant may include other parties that are integral to living out the gospel in community as God calls us.

Ministry personnel and lay members of the regional council and neighbouring communities of faith are invited to celebrate along with the people of the community of faith and their new minister. A regional council liaison is also there.

The expectations of attendance for covenanting services are flexible and must take into consideration the community of faith's context. The regional council is encouraged to include a time to celebrate all new covenants from the past year at the annual meeting.

Best Practices

The previous sections outline elements of the pastoral relations process that must be followed. This section provides guidance, suggestions, and recommendations for additional resources on how the mandatory policies and procedures can be met and focuses on the relational aspect of the pastoral relations process. After all, pastoral relations is about relationships between ministers and communities of people living out their faith.

Communicating with the Community of Faith

Throughout the pastoral relations process, you will want to share updates with your community of faith. *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith* has some suggested communications that you can share at the various stages of your journey. They could be used in a worship bulletin or a website update to keep the community of faith up to date on the work, while respecting the confidentiality of the process.

There are four main parts to the pastoral relations process:

1. Request a change in pastoral relations. Your regional council liaison and regional council minister support this process.
2. Community of faith / ministry personnel profiles. Guidance and a toolbox of options for your community of faith profile are included below.
3. Search and selection.
4. Covenanting.

Requesting a Change in Pastoral Relations

A community of faith most often enters into the pastoral relations process because their minister has requested a change in pastoral relations and is moving to another community of faith. You may also use the pastoral relations process in circumstances such as these:

- there are enough youth at your church to add a youth minister to the staff team;
- your minister has announced their plan to retire;
- your congregation is struggling financially and you need to have a conversation about changing the terms of your minister’s appointment;
- your congregation has recently amalgamated with a neighbouring congregation and the new church has to make decisions on its ministry needs; or
- your community of faith has enough money to explore new ministry options.

There are more pastoral relations resources available at www.united-church.ca. Regional council staff are also available to support communities of faith that have entered or are considering entering the pastoral relations processes.

Discerning Next Steps

Before you can call or appoint ministry personnel, or make other decisions about your future, you will need to complete your community of faith profile. Completing a profile can help to articulate your community's beliefs, ministry needs, and financial realities.

The governing body of the community of faith will choose how to delegate the responsibilities of completing a community of faith profile. This work may be divided up in any way that suits the community of faith. The governing body may prepare the profile or appoint a team to prepare the profile, or the whole community of faith may participate in preparing the profile.

Supply Appointment (see *The Manual*, section I.1.8)

Once a pastoral relationship has ended, you may want to have a supply minister appointed to offer leadership until your community of faith's profile is written and the associated position filled. The governing body is empowered to request that the regional council approve a supply appointment.

For this work, the governing body can ask the Ministry and Personnel Committee to prepare a position description. The governing body can also assign a group of individuals to be the interview team to interview applicants and recommend one name to the governing body.

The interview team can use some of the interview questions found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*, but they must be mindful of human rights in their work. The governing body approves the recommendation to appoint the successful applicant and forwards the request for appointment to the regional council for approval.

Meeting with Regional Council

Through prayer and discernment, you will attend to God's accompaniment of your community of faith throughout the pastoral relations process. Someone named by your regional council will also accompany you in the process. This could be staff or a liaison and they will want to meet with your team shortly after you form to begin your training.

Areas of training include

- Holy Manners
- an overview of the community of faith profile
- considerations for part-time ministry
- introduction to Supervised Ministry Education
- using ChurchHub

Preparing Your Community of Faith Profile

The first major piece of work for a community of faith undergoing a change in the pastoral relationship is to prepare the community of faith profile.

In each section of the community of faith profile, honesty is important. Together, the various pieces of the profile express: *This is who we are, and these are the resources we have*.

The people tasked with creating the profile will want to consult with several groups.

1. The community of faith: It is mandatory to consult with the community of faith. The profile should reflect the desires of the community of faith.
2. The incumbent ministry personnel: You may wish to consult with the current ministry personnel (including an intentional interim minister). They will often have insight into your community of faith and its current and future needs.
3. Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee: You may wish to consult with the M&P Committee. Its members will be familiar with your previous ministry personnel and their roles, responsibilities, and leadership. They can be helpful as the profile team drafts a position description.
4. The governing body.

For consultation with the community of faith, you can choose from a variety of approaches:

- written requests for feedback (e.g., given out with the Sunday bulletin and collected during coffee hour)
- phone interviews
- face-to-face conversations: one large group, small group conversations, or focus groups
- identifying a group of people in your faith community as listeners and asking them to speak with as many people as possible about a specific set of questions or ideas and report back to the team.

You may want to focus the time with the community of faith on a particular area, or ask broad questions about the ministry needs in general.

Try to plan your consultation in such a way that it is easy for everyone to participate, not just people who are already leaders. It is important to hear from everyone: youth, young adults, children, adherents, seniors, people who only attend on Sunday, families who come to the church for all of their life passages (weddings, baptisms, funerals) but don’t attend regularly.

Community of faith profiles can be written in either English or French and uploaded to ChurchHub.

Living Faith Story

The living faith story articulates the community of faith’s ministry focus. The living faith story is your opportunity to share why you exist as a community of faith. All communities of faith are expected to develop a living faith story, review it regularly, and share it with the regional council so that support can be programmed. The living faith story is an opportunity to tell a story about where God is leading the community of faith.

The living faith story can be written—or it could be an audio or video recording of the community of faith telling their story.

It is hoped that this stage of the pastoral relations process will not be onerous. The community of faith may use one of the following as their living faith story:

- A recent Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) report may only need slight modification to tell the community's story.
- A recent ministry profile, list of mission and ministry priorities, living ministry profile, ministry articulation profile, or essence statement from an Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project in your former Conference may need only slight modification.
- If your community of faith has recently participated in a visioning exercise with EDGE, you could use your ministry goals, vision statement, and current realities articulated in that work.
- A narrative budget and other applicable material (that names your ministry both within and beyond the community of faith) from the Called to Be the Church giving program (www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca) could be suitable.
- Use an existing vision or long-range planning document.
- Finally, of course, you can develop a unique, original living faith story, which articulates the ministry of your community of faith.

Below are some examples of how the process might unfold:

- A community of faith has recently participated in a visioning exercise with EDGE. The governing body takes the vision statement developed from that congregation work, with the ministry plan, and uses that as the living faith story. The real property report and demographics are already on the community of faith's ChurchHub page from their submission of blue-form stats. The chair and two volunteers write up the position description, which is based on the ministry plan.
- A community of faith wants to gather over Sunday lunch to prepare the living faith story with questions available from a regional council liaison. They ask the regional council liaison to facilitate their session and a couple of congregational members to take notes. They determine that they are called to be a Supervised Ministry Education learning site, and so work with the liaison to complete the Learning Site Requirements.
- A community of faith has recently been using the stewardship resource Called to Be the Church. The governing body decides to submit the narrative budget as their living faith story. The rest of the elements are completed by members of the governing body.
- A community of faith is at their wits' end. For their living faith story, the governing body writes: "We are a faithful people who love God but have no idea what direction our ministry should be heading. We would like a minister to help us figure that out." The governing body then works together to compile the other elements of their profile.

> "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19–20)

If all of this sounds new and there's nothing that your community of faith could currently use as your living faith story, please contact your regional council liaison. Your liaison can provide you with resources to produce a living faith story, such as a template based on the same categories as the ministry personnel profiles that you'll review in ChurchHub.

When you develop your living faith story, you will also want to think about the search filters that you will name, so that ministry personnel have an easier time finding your profile. Ministry personnel can search for communities of faith according to the following parameters:

- regional availability—regional council 1–16
- hours—full-time or part-time
- start date
- manse
- Supervised Ministry Education site
- solo or team ministry
- urban, suburban, or rural
- ethnocultural or linguistic specific community of faith
- Indigenous community of faith
- Affirming community of faith

Demographics

The living faith story helps to both articulate the community of faith's witness to the gospel and articulate its ministry needs. The demographics section begins to summarize the community of faith's resources and context of ministry. For now, the demographics section of the community of faith profile is populated through pre-existing data from the *Year Book*, which is collected annually from the statistics forms. Through ChurchHub you should be able update or change inaccurate data in the demographics section of the profile. Moving forward, we expect that the demographics available will provide a fuller picture of the community of faith's context.

> "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20)

Real Property

The community of faith continues to describe its ministry context by outlining some of the details of its real property. A worksheet for the real property information is found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*.

Financial Viability Review

The financial viability review continues to summarize the community of faith's resources. This form will help the governing body and the search team consider the financial situation of the community of faith and of each point in a multi-point charge. A worksheet for financial viability review is found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*.

It is difficult to make financial decisions for a community of faith. Once you have collected the data, discuss the patterns you see and their implications, and meet at least once with the treasurer to discuss them. Use your observations to make recommendations. If you have completed a narrative budget that is distinct from your living faith story, you can attach it along with your financial viability review.

As you complete the financial viability review, the following guidance may be helpful:

- *Question 1:* Your expenses, revenues, and balances can be found for past years in the financial statements of your annual meetings. If you had capital changes, please include them in the comments. The treasurer will appreciate assistance from the search team in gathering this information.
- *Question 3:* If you have experienced a deficit, consider the following: How have you managed your finances? Did you borrow from yourselves? From others? If the deficits were in the last three years, what are your plans for turning this situation around? How long have you struggled with deficits?
- *Question 4:* If you have outstanding loans, how much is still owing? To whom? At what interest rate? Does the interest plus the principal exceed 20% of the community of faith's income? Did you have a plan for paying that money back before you borrowed it? If so, how is it working?
- *Question 5:* Maintenance is the regular work for keeping your building(s) running. If your building is heated electrically, you probably can't separate utilities and fuel. Just put in the one number under Utilities.
- *Questions 6–8:* It is sometimes difficult to remember how contributors donated in past years. Please do your best here. This information is valuable for projecting your future financial resources.
- *Question 10:* Include funds from the sale of a manse here.

Recommendations

The search team, your treasurer or stewardship committee, and your governing body might be asked to help look at the data to make recommendations. Consider the following:

- Patterns seen in givings over the years
- Patterns in expenses
- Cost of the building(s)
- Patterns seen in the community of faith (givers)
- Moving expenses (more information available in the *Financial Handbook for Congregations* at www.united-church.ca)
- Efficiency of your buildings and upgrades that might be needed soon

Because this tool is part of your community of faith profile and pastoral relations process, it asks that you specifically speak to staffing costs and ongoing viability. Other recommendations might include the need for a stewardship program or property upgrades or simply note that the community's call of ministry personnel is supported by these financial viability findings.

> "Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common."
> (Acts 4:32)

Position Description(s)

The position description articulates the community of faith's ministry needs. An accurate position description provides an organized summary of the duties, tasks, responsibilities, and accountability of the position, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to competently fulfill them. While writing this position description, look at the results of your living faith story. A position description template is found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*.

This is one piece of work where the search team will want to closely collaborate with the M&P Committee to ensure consistency with other position descriptions. Also, you will want to consult with other staff—both ministry personnel and lay employees—for their input to ensure that the position description is accurate in describing the ways the position is meant to complement, overlap, coordinate, and collaborate with their roles. In your consultations, be very clear that you are asking for their ideas related to the position, not their decision-making.

> "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42)

An effective position description shows that the community of faith has carefully assessed the need for the position and the expectations for the person in that position. Take time in the beginning to get it right. That will leave fewer chances for miscommunication and unrealistic expectations after the ministry personnel is called or appointed.

Manse Report, if Applicable

If your community of faith has a manse that will be offered to ministry personnel as part of the negotiation of a call or appointment, include the Manse Information Summary Sheet as part of your profile. A worksheet to prepare the information can be found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*. The information is then entered online at ChurchHub.

Supervised Ministry Education Learning Site Requirements, if Applicable

If your regional council liaison assesses that your community of faith would be a suitable learning site for a candidate, you will be introduced to Supervised Ministry Education (SME) in your training. The commitment to be a SME site varies with the requirements of the candidate's educational program. The appointment offered by the community of faith must be at least half-time (20 hours per week); depending on the candidate's learning goals and program requirements, it can be up to full-time.

Communities of faith that enter into a learning covenant undertake a ministry on behalf of the whole church to provide a context in which those preparing for paid accountable ministry can engage in the practice of ministry with intentional reflection and learning. As you develop your community of faith profile, ask yourselves, "Do we feel called to consider filling our ministry personnel vacancy by becoming a learning site for a candidate for ministry?"

As a community of faith undertaking to be a SME learning site, you are likely to experience some or all of these gifts of ministry:

- The enthusiasm of a candidate's leadership as they explore serving in ministry.
- New ideas and perspectives, as the candidate integrates their learning into the leadership they offer.
- The insights that come from being a learning community, where lay people are partners in reflecting on leadership and ministry.
- The support of the wider church through those that support the learning covenant, such as the educational supervisor and the Office of Vocation staff.
- The joy of seeing the candidate grow in ministry leadership and being a part of that growth.
- A renewed sense of purpose and ministry as a context for sharing in the ministry of the wider church through preparing and nurturing new ministry leadership.

Requirements of a SME learning site:

1. Ability to support at least a half-time appointment;
2. Ability to provide a safe and respectful learning environment in which there is clarity of expectation;
3. Being a community of faith that is healthy and vital that can provide a context for learning and growth. Communities of faith that are in conflict, those that should be considering intentional interim ministry following a long pastoral relationship, or those concluding a pastoral relationship that was conflicted are not appropriate contexts for a SME;
4. Ability to gather a Lay Supervision Team of not less than four people who are committed to meeting with the candidate during the time of the appointment to support and encourage learning, explore the learning goals, and submit evaluations as required;
5. Have in place a functioning governing body and M&P Committee; and
6. Have an ADP account through which compensation is managed.

The decision to be a SME site is a ministry decision. It should emerge from the community of faith's understanding of its ministry context and be anchored in a faithful response to God's prompting to be a learning community. The discernment questions offered by your regional council liaison can help the you discern your calling. You may want to have the members of your governing body be part of discernment too.

If you are willing to be a SME site, note it as you prepare your community of faith profile and include a position description appropriate to SME. The profile should indicate whether you are seeking only applicants for a SME appointment or whether you are open to both applicants for SME and ministry personnel applicants for call or appointment.

Other Possibilities for Your Community of Faith

Preparing a community of faith profile does not always lead to a new pastoral relationship.

It could, for example, lead to a reduction in ministry personnel. In multiple staff situations, when ministry personnel are being reduced and a new position description is developed (as part of the community of faith profile), the governing body determines whether current ministry personnel are eligible to apply for the new position. Usually, if the new position description is considerably different from the old one, a vacancy will be declared. Current ministry personnel receive a minimum of 90 days' notice and are usually eligible to apply for the new position—but not automatically assured of getting it.

A community of faith may discern other options:

- becoming a lay-led faith community, with oversight by a pastoral charge supervisor;
- amalgamating with another community of faith;
- sharing ministry with other nearby communities of faith;
- disbanding;
- adding ministry personnel to a staff team; or
- requesting intentional interim ministry from the regional council.

As a community of faith discerns next steps, it can seek support and guidance from regional council staff.

Searching for an Interim Minister

If a community of faith discerns, through the preparation of their profile, that they are in need of intentional interim ministry leadership, the regional council is responsible to appoint a representative to an Interim Ministry Transition Team in the community of faith. The first role of the Transition Team is to search for an intentional interim minister. Consult the Interim Ministry resources on www.united-church.ca.

Approving and Posting Your Community of Faith Profile

Once the governing body and your community of faith approve the profile, the regional council also needs to approve it. If approved, it can be viewed on ChurchHub by ministry personnel searching for a new pastoral relationship.

Forming the Search Team

The governing body is free to appoint as many members to the search team as it deems necessary to represent the community and function well. The community of faith has the flexibility to appoint the people it considers most suitable for its search team, whether they are full members or adherents. In a pastoral charge with two or more congregations, there should be representation from each congregation. Ministry personnel who are currently serving in the community of faith should not be on the search team, even if the community of faith is considering growing a team ministry. Other staff members should also not be on the search team. Rather, the search team is encouraged to consult with current ministry personnel and staff as they develop the community of faith profile.

People with these qualities make good team members:

- They have the confidence of the community of faith.
- They reflect the various areas of the community of faith’s life and work: committees or groups, age, gender, and involvement in the community of faith.
- They are able to listen, consult, and discern with people; gather and analyze data; write clearly; and follow through with paperwork.
- They are comfortable with the language of theology.
- It is helpful to have someone with background and skills in human resources management.

In forming the search team, avoid the following:

- The Ministry and Personnel Committee, as a whole committee, should not replace the search team. A member of the M&P Committee can serve on the search team but preferably not the committee’s chair.
- Anyone who will have a conflict of interest in the process.
- More than one member of the same family, if possible.

> “So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

First Meeting

The team needs to be intentional in building community and setting the expectations for their work. This occurs before you begin working with a liaison from your regional council. At the first meeting, take time to get to know one another:

- Pray as you begin (and end) your meeting. Keep this practice up in subsequent meetings.
- Express your excitement, hopes, and fears.
- Share the gifts each person brings to the process.
- Do you have reflections or observations on how the community of faith feels about the change?

The search team's tasks include the following:

- Communicate with the community of faith about their progress. (This can be done at meetings of the governing body, in worship, or in a newsletter—see *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith* for templates.)
- Ensure that all team members review the relevant sections of this resource; it is the guide for the work of your team.
- Keep the minutes/record of each meeting.
- Set the quorum for the group.
- Compile and share a contact list of team members.
- Manage the community of faith profile and post documents on ChurchHub.

The search team may want to set up a temporary e-mail account for sending and receiving material related to the search. This avoids mixing official church communications with personal e-mails. The account can be deleted once the search process has concluded.

What Is ChurchHub?

▪ A major part of our new pastoral relations system is the Office of Vocation database that holds all personnel records.
▪ This database includes ChurchHub—a place where ministry personnel and candidates can sign in and access their personal profile.
▪ Communities of faith are also able to sign in and access their profile.
▪ ChurchHub is where ministry personnel search for a new call or appointment and communities of faith search for a new minister.
▪ ChurchHub is secure. The only people who can see ministry personnel profiles that are posted as available for call or appointment are communities of faith that also have profiles that are posted as available for call or appointment. Everyone can see community of faith profiles all the time. The database connected to ChurchHub is housed in Canada.
▪ It can be found at: www.churchhub.ca.
▪ The Indigenous Church will be self-determining in whether or how they use ChurchHub.

If the search team decides that they need a chair, the chair must be willing to spend time familiarizing themselves with the pastoral relations process. It is helpful if the chair is a good facilitator or listener. It would also be helpful if the chair had a level of awareness to be able to discern when the group is not being culturally sensitive.

During the first meeting of the search team, set the quorum for the group. While attendance and participation of team members is important, at times not all team members will be able to make a meeting. Two-thirds is often agreed to and in cases of multi-point pastoral charges, you might agree that the quorum is two-thirds of the team members with representation from each of the points.

Meeting Format

A standard meeting format can help keep you focused on the task and give everyone—including those who might not otherwise speak up—a sense of confidence.

Here's a suggested format. It can be adjusted to reflect the nature of your team.

- Gathering together:
    - Look at the agenda and confirm we understand our task(s) for the meeting
    - Check in; what do I need to let go of in order to be fully present in this meeting?
- Prayer for our meeting and for the specific tasks we are undertaking
- Review of follow-up items from last meeting's minutes; did people do what they committed to?
- New content or new task: is there new learning we need to undertake before we can attempt this task?
- Work on the task(s).
- Fifteen minutes before scheduled end of meeting:
    - Where are we at? Have we accomplished what we needed to? If not, what is our plan to do so?
    - Confirm date, time, and purpose of next meeting so that participants can prepare.
    - Confirm to-do items and preparation for next meeting.
- Closing:
    - Share any concerns or fears you have right now about the process. Offer these to God and to each other.
    - Offer thanks to each other for specific gifts that were offered. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to share.
    - Close with a song or silence or spoken prayer.

Search Team Training by Regional Council

Areas of focus for this training include the following:

- overview of the search process;
- Holy Manners;
- bias and difference;
- human rights;
- eligibility and overview of streams of ministry;
- confidentiality and conflict of interest;
- using ChurchHub for search; and
- administrative decisions for the team (decision-making, budget, practice for covering mileage/travel or interviewing with technology).

If a new team is formed to provide leadership during this phase of the process, they'll need to be introduced to some of the topics covered in the first training.

Exploring Ministry Personnel Profiles for Potential Matches

You will have learned how to log in to ChurchHub in your training, or from posting your community of faith profile. On this portal, you can review profiles of ministry personnel who are searching for a pastoral relationship, and your community of faith will be tagged as searching for a new pastoral relationship. The process begins with reviewing ministry personnel profiles to look for potential matches. As you review ministry personnel profiles and assess whether they are a potential match, your profile is being reviewed by ministry personnel too.

Matching in ChurchHub

As you look for a match, there are further instructions on using ChurchHub on this online portal.

You can filter ministry personnel profiles by

- ministry status—designated lay minister (DLM), diaconal minister (DM), ordained minister (OM), candidate supply, Supervised Ministry Education (SME)
- hours—full-time or part-time
- regional availability—regional council 1–16
- languages spoken—English, French, or other
- designated intentional interim minister

Ministry personnel profiles are based on a similar format of describing different areas of ministry according to the categories from the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel (available on www.united-church.ca). You may find the individual worksheet for matching profiles (found in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*) helpful. As you review a ministry personnel profile, you can mark it a "good match," "maybe match," or "no match." The worksheet is useful to review one ministry personnel profile at a time. Remember that a potential match is not a good or bad judgment about you or the ministry personnel; it is an assessment of the match of your community of faith's ministry needs, vision, and story to the ministry personnel's skills and gifts.

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

Because the goal is a healthy pastoral relationship, consider your most important areas of ministry first; this aspect needs to have the best alignment. If you have a good match, but it's only in categories that aren't as important to your ministry, it may not be the best overall match. Only invite ministry personnel to an interview if you feel there is a solid enough match to grow into a healthy pastoral relationship.

For Potential Supervised Ministry Education Appointment

If you are open for a SME appointment, as you review profiles in ChurchHub, filter ministry personnel profiles to see only candidates. As candidates review community of faith profiles, they will only be able to see the profiles of the communities of faith whose profile includes a willingness to be a SME learning site.

As ministry personnel review your community of faith profile, they may communicate with you through ChurchHub because they see a potential match. Assess their profile before you invite them to an interview, and discern for yourself whether that ministry personnel might be a good match.

In reviewing potential matches, you bring your openness to experiencing God's Spirit in the process. You are looking for a ministry personnel who you feel is called to minister in a particular local context. If you have not found a solid match, is God calling you to wait? Do you need to seek some support from regional council staff or your support person in your process of searching for a new pastoral relationship?

Applications from candidates seeking a SME student appointment will include learning goals approved by the Candidacy Board. Review of the learning goals in relation to the position description will be a useful part of assessing applications.

If You Are Considering a Supervised Ministry Education Appointment

Communities of faith may choose to make their vacancy open to both candidates seeking a SME appointment and accredited ministry personnel seeking a call or appointment. However, this creates the difficulty of trying to assess applicants who are offering very different skills and experiences of ministry.

At the time of shortlisting applicants, you need to decide whether to proceed to fill the vacancy as a SME learning site or as a call or appointment for accredited ministry personnel. This allows the interview process to be focused on how the candidates' learning goals, or how the skills and gifts of an accredited ministry personnel, fit with your community of faith. It also avoids the difficulty of comparing people who are preparing for ministry leadership with people who are experienced in ministry.

Preparing for First Interviews

Having shortlisted some ministry personnel after reviewing profiles in ChurchHub, the search team meets to prepare for first interviews. Use this gathering to develop the interview process and interview questions, and review the team's biases, identified earlier in training.

The goal of the interview is to enable the interviewee to have the best possible experience and, thus, be able to articulate how they are the best applicant for your vacancy. That will give you the best possible information as a basis for your discernment and decision.

Therefore, for good interviews, the search team

- is welcoming and well organized;
- recognizes the interview as a holy and mutual encounter for all who are present and strives to provide a "culturally safe" environment for all interviewees;
- protects basic human rights and adheres to all legislated provincial/territorial human rights codes;
- enables each interviewee to respond to a consistent set of questions that allow them to clearly identify their passions, skills, interests, and areas for continued growth, and why they see this as the right position for them;
- evaluates responses in a consistent and transparent way; and
- honours each person's worth and value during and after the interview by respectfully and prayerfully discerning as they evaluate each interviewee and collectively make their decision.

Organizing for Interviews

Here are some tips for being welcoming and organized at each interview:

- Contact the interviewee well in advance to offer an interview. Assist in arranging transportation, directions, and/or accommodation (if appropriate).
- Determine the best location for the interview. If an interviewee lives far away, it may be appropriate to arrange an interview using Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime. However, be aware of any bias the team might have when reviewing interviews and discerning between an electronic interview and an in-person interview. If an interview will be in person it could be held at the church, but if the search team is worried about maintaining confidentiality, the interview could be held offsite. Explore holding interviews at a community space, like a community room in a local library or at a community centre.
- Ask the person to arrive about ten minutes ahead of time. Offer the use of washroom facilities, a glass of water, and a quiet place to sit for a few minutes if they so choose.
- Interview in a comfortable location that gives people adequate personal space.
- Plan for no more than a 60-minute interview. This allows for
    - greeting, introductions, overview of the interview process, and opening prayer
    - 10 questions (*Note:* In some cultures storytelling is very important. You may not get to all of your questions in a 60-minute period, so plan appropriately.)

  - questions from the interviewee to the search team
  - thanks and next steps
  - closing prayer
- Allow 15 minutes (but no more) just in case you go over.
- Allow two hours for the entire interview process: greeting, closing, accompanying the interviewee out, reviewing how it went, and break.
- Try not to schedule more than three interviews back to back. We just don't listen as well by the end of the third interview.

Roles for Interviews

One way to organize the search team during interviews is to assign roles to team members.

A. Host

- May be the contact person who has already been in touch with the interviewees.
- Makes sure that search team members wear name tags.
- Greets the interviewee.
- Helps to make them comfortable prior to the interview beginning (e.g. washrooms, water).
- Opens interview with introductions; explains who will do what during the interview.
- Closes the interview and thanks the interviewee. Explains the next steps realistically (e.g., "X will be back in touch with you by such and such a time.").
- Offers to accompany the interviewee out.

B. Timekeeper

- Let the interviewee know when they have taken more than five minutes to respond to a question. (The interviewee can continue if desired, but it means that they will have to spend less time on subsequent questions.)
- Tell the team and the interviewee when 50 minutes have elapsed. At this point, you should move into the period for the interviewee to ask questions.
- Tell the team when 60 minutes have elapsed, at which point the host begins to move toward closure.

C. Question Askers

- These members ask specific questions assigned to them ahead of time.

D. Response Recorders

- Members of the team jot down responses as they are able. When asking a question, they may not jot down responses because they want to tune in and really listen to the interviewee. The records of others then become more important.

- The interview records that are kept are considered the records of the team, not of any one team member. They are to be shared openly as useful information among the team only.
- Some response recorders may be comfortable taking notes in the interviews. Other teams may want to make up an interview worksheet to use through the interviews. Other team members may be most comfortable listening and jotting a few notes at the end.

A Holy Encounter in Interviews

The work of the search team is different from the selection of employees by an organization's human resources department. The hope is for the interview to feel like a holy encounter. As they move through the pastoral relations process, the search team partners with God's Spirit in their work. The host may invite someone to offer prayer, but it should not be the interviewee!

Here's a sample opening prayer:

> "God who welcomes us—we thank you for the gift of (*person's name*) who has joined us here, and for the gifts and skills that they bring. Be with us now as we talk together. Give us open hearts and minds to perceive the movement of your Spirit among us. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen."

Another crucial aspect of holy encounter is the idea of mutuality; this is not just one-way questions being asked of the interviewee and their responses. Rather, it is meant to be a conversation that allows at least a little time for the interviewee to also ask questions of the search team.

A holy encounter respects the United Church's call to become an intercultural church. The search team establishes an environment that is "culturally safe" for all interviewees. A culturally safe interview is one in which interviewers:

- are aware of their biases and have taken steps to minimize the impact of their biases on the interview;
- express empathy and demonstrate a genuine desire to understand the experience and gifts of the interviewee regardless of diversity of culture, ethnicity, first language, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other identity;
- communicate with care and check for interviewee's understanding;
- establish a relationship with the interviewee through "attending behaviours" such as making appropriate eye contact, nodding, and leaning forward;
- convey respect and openness to each interviewee by appearing warm, relaxed, supportive, and non-judgmental, particularly in cross-cultural interviews where the interviewee may need substantial reassurance; and
- respectfully ask interviewees to speak more slowly or repeat the response if the interviewer has not understood.

Close with a prayer, as a reminder to all that this process is not merely one to "fill a position" but a spiritual process.

Here's a sample closing prayer:

> "Loving Creator—we thank you for this time together. We ask that you bless all of us with your wisdom and your spirit of discernment as we leave each other. Grant us safety as we return to our places. Amen."

Human Rights

As you prepare for your first interviews, remember your earlier training on bias, difference, and human rights. You will want to ensure you address your biases and ensure that you honour human rights throughout the search process. Occasionally, in an interview, an applicant may offer information about their family, gender, or political affiliation. The search team must not ask for further information or use the information as evaluation criteria.

No part of the pastoral relations process, including interviews, may include questions that relate directly or indirectly to prohibited grounds of discrimination. Asking questions to solicit information in any of these areas is inappropriate and could be challenged as a violation of human rights.

What Questions to Ask

Ask the same questions of each interviewee. If you will spend no more than 60–75 minutes per interview, plan for no more than 10 questions.

Use a variety of approaches:

- *Knowledge-based or theoretical questions:* Ask the interviewee to describe what they believe or think, or how they have learned what they believe.
- *Experiential questions:* Ask interviewees to use specific examples from their experience to demonstrate what they believe or think.
- *Creative or abstract questions:* Ask questions that require the interviewee to paint a picture.
- *Good times and hard times:* It's important to ask questions that tease out both moments of great achievement and ones that were hard. Each of us learns differently from positive and negative experiences. It's important to hear how the interviewee responds to both, so use a mix of questions that draw out positive and negative experiences.

A variety of question types gives the search team better and more encompassing information. Equally important, different people find it easier or more difficult to respond to different kinds of questions, so by asking a variety of types, you give each interviewee a number of different ways to show their strengths. You don't have to make up your own questions. There is an inventory of potential questions in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of*

Faith. Any of the questions can be easily adapted to fit any particular category by changing a few words. You can use some as is or to prompt your own questions.

When choosing wording, be straightforward and clear. When an interviewee responds to a question based on misunderstanding it, their response can be inconsistent with what you had hoped to hear. The interviewers may interpret the response as reflecting the interviewee's personality, theological perspective, interpersonal approach, or communication skills, when in reality, the problem stemmed not from the interviewee but from the wording of the question. This is called "notational bias."

The following are quick tips for wording questions (particularly when there are cross-cultural and/or first-language differences among the interviewee and interviewers):

- Try to keep your questions as short as possible (without limiting their complexity or what you are trying to elicit).
- Avoid jargon and short forms that may be understood only by those who have grown up in your local context, in Canada, or in The United Church of Canada.
- Avoid metaphors and analogies and use straightforward language.

When ordering the questions, start with at least one easy one. Generally, knowledge questions are much easier than experiential or creative questions. Tell the interviewee what the question is about and that they can ask you to repeat a question. Remember that your job is to help each interviewee have the best possible interview with you.

First Interviews

The search team arrives prior to the start of the scheduled interviews. It is important that the same people are present for every interview. Confirm each team member's roles. The team can also review the interviewee's profile and discuss briefly if there is something that they want to remember in the interview from the interviewee's material.

The team is responsible for creating a welcoming and organized space for the interviews, as well as creating a sacred space to enable a holy encounter during the interviews. Remember your training and discussion about bias. Human rights must be honoured at all times. Occasionally, in an interview, an applicant may offer information about their family, gender, or political affiliation. The search team must not ask for further information or use the information as evaluation criteria.

Enjoy the sacred time in conversation with the interviewee as together you discern whether God is calling you all to enter into a new pastoral relationship together.

Debriefing and Discerning after First Interviews

Gather the search team and consider, regarding each interviewee:

- What impressed or excited us?
- What concerned us, if anything?
- Was there anything we heard that we need to set aside because it is unrelated to the position description and could unfairly bias our perspective (e.g., we didn't ask but we heard that the interviewee is in the process of adopting a child)?

As the team moves into discernment, you can work through this process for each interviewee:

- Picture them again in your mind's eye. Thank God for their gifts and skills and willingness to come and meet.
- Have each team member indicate their overall assessment in simple terms ("Wow! Excellent," etc.).
- Ask everyone to share a couple of the notes they jotted down to justify their assessment. Is there agreement? Find out why there was disagreement: Did you hear things differently? Did someone pick up something that others didn't? Do others agree?
- Gently and in a spirit of courageous love, challenge each other.
- Overall, what would you individually assign as your assessment of the match: "Strong Match," "Potential Match," or "Not a Good Match."
- Compare these individual assessments within the team.
- Is a consensus emerging? How are your biases at play in your discernment?
- If there are strong feelings, it could well be because you're getting tired and not just because you're in disagreement with each other. Agree to come back together to make your decision. Review your decision-making agreements.
- Whatever you do, end in prayer with thanksgiving for the diversity of perspectives and gifts on your team.

Checking References

Through the first interviews, the search team identifies one person who presents as a good match. Determine the questions to be asked in the reference checks about this one individual, and then delegate the task of reference checking to one or more members. The results of a minimum of two reference checks are provided to the search team and discussed prior to making further decisions. The reference checks are recorded, signed, and dated. This step includes a final confirmation of eligibility with your Office of Vocation minister.

It is strongly encouraged that at least one reference be provided by the chair of the governing body or chair of the M&P Committee of the individual's current pastoral relationship. If the interviewee declines for you to contact either of these individuals, ask why, and ask that the interviewee provide an equivalent reference from the pastoral relationship that immediately preceded the current one. Alternatively, you may wait to contact the references from their current ministry until after the second interview, when you have agreed to move forward into negotiating terms.

If you are checking references for a candidate or someone who has not yet been in a pastoral relationship, a reference will come from a field placement or educational supervisor or someone (like chair of the governing body or chair of the worship committee) from a community of faith where they have done pulpit supply.

The following are qualities of a good reference check:

- It is based on people who have known and worked closely with the interviewee in the recent past.
- It seeks to confirm or question what you already know based on the interviewee's information and interview.
- It provides opportunity for additional information that you can follow up on if needed.

You will find a Reference Check Sample Worksheet in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith*.

> "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."
> (Luke 4:22)

As part of reference checking, it is also helpful to attend a worship gathering at which the ministry personnel is an active leader. You may have already had them supply you with sermons or recordings of worship, so you have an idea of how they lead worship. If distance prevents attendance or if they are a candidate who does not lead worship regularly, ask for recordings or, if you know of someone you trust in the area, send them on your behalf with a list of comments you want them to make.

If your position description does not require a significant amount of worship leadership, this step is not required. Importantly, don't do "surprise" visits! Arrange the visit with the ministry personnel ahead of time.

Debriefing and Discerning after Checking References

After the reference checks are completed, gather the search team and have the members present the results. Invite questions from the rest of the team. If there are no questions, sit in silence for a few moments. Go around the circle asking each person for a comment about what they have heard. How does what you've heard affirm or challenge your sense about this individual's match with our community of faith? Sit in silence again for a few moments. You may want to pray together.

Then check to see if people are ready to make a decision about proceeding to a second interview. If so, go around the circle again and ask each person to comment on where they are at. For example:

- I feel positively enough about our match to proceed to a second interview.
- I need some more time to talk together.
- I'd like to ask for one more reference.
- I do not feel confident with this match. I do not feel that we should proceed further.

Make sure you take the time you need for this step. Use your decision-making rules (consensus, majority, majority threshold). If you are using majority vote but aren't really ready, then agree to wait. Or agree to do another reference check. Have an action plan. Whatever point you arrive at, end in prayer.

Second Interviews

The purpose of a second interview is to dig deeper into a potential match. It gives more time for responses to a few questions from the search team and questions from the interviewee. A second interview tends to be more conversational in style and less formal than the first interview. The goal is to continue discerning fit and to continue to listen to where the Holy Spirit is calling the community of faith and the ministry personnel.

It also offers the opportunity for the search team and the interviewee to identify their needs regarding the call or appointment terms without getting into negotiating the actual terms. In general, a second interview is highly recommended. If the first interview was held using an internet-based video technology, ensure that the second interview takes place face-to-face.

If this is a team situation, you might also incorporate a meet-and-greet that involves other ministry and non-ministry staff.

> "Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind." (1 Kings 3:12)

Planning Second Interviews

The search team meets to confirm the process ahead of time. Be organized as in the first interview: have a host and a timekeeper, and agree who will ask questions and who will keep notes.

If you are unsure about how to word your questions so as to avoid any potential miscommunication, consult with your regional council liaison to make sure that you are asking in an appropriate and effective way. You will also want to offer an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions.

Suggested format:

- Opening prayer
- Re-introductions; purpose and informal nature of the interview—digging deeper into our potential match
- Follow-up to first interview questions (these are questions, no more than three or four, to follow up on what you heard in the first interview)
- Questions from the interviewee
- Understand each other’s needs for potential terms of the call or appointment:
    - Share your needs in terms of timing, some anticipated terms of call, etc.
    - Ask the interviewee’s needs in terms of timing, terms of call, etc.
- Agree on next steps
- Close in prayer

Discerning and Decision-making after Second Interview(s)

You have completed the first interview, the reference checks, and a second interview, and you may have led a meet-and-greet process with other staff. Here are some suggestions for discernment and decision-making:

- Spend time in individual reflection.
- Ask for an initial show of hands in response to the question “Can I support a recommendation to extend a call or appointment to this individual?”
- Have a discussion, giving each person three to five minutes to reflect on the following:
    - How have I seen this person describe or demonstrate the skills, gifts, and passions that will help us to achieve our ministry priorities?
    - Do I believe that we can offer this person the right kind of ministry context in which they can truly respond to their call?
- If the discussion starts to become disrespectful in any way, call yourselves back to your Holy Manners. Spend time in prayer again, asking for a spirit of compassion and respect to fall among and within you.

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

After the time of discussion and prayer, make your decision in the way you have agreed to. Any disagreement over the final choice must be kept confidential, to give the community of faith and the ministry personnel the best starting point for their pastoral relationship.

Or you can agree to defer your decision. But if you do, decide what you are doing in the meantime: What additional information are you seeking? What are you expecting to happen by deferring?

Record your decision in the minutes. Extend thanks to each other and to God.

Sometimes this is a relatively straightforward process. In that case, you can move right into a discussion about the parameters of the terms that you are giving to two members of the search team to negotiate with the individual.

Negotiating Terms of Call or Appointment

Two members of the search team will negotiate the terms of the call or appointment directly, while keeping within the parameters provided by the governing body (e.g. "Up to a certain salary grid level" or "Up to a certain amount for continuing education, technology, etc.") Ideally, this discussion takes place face-to-face, although meetings over the internet can also work. It is important to do this as quickly as possible, but allow the time needed to do it well.

Only negotiate terms with your top applicant. At no time should you negotiate with more than one person at a time. Similarly, ministry personnel should negotiate with only one community of faith at a time. To negotiate with more than one community of faith or minister at a time is unethical.

Minimum requirements of a call or appointment are set out by *The Manual*. These minimums must be met by the terms the governing body approves. If the search team and the ministry personnel wish to negotiate outside of the budget set by the governing body, the search team must first take a recommendation back to the governing body to approve an increase to the budget. For compensation information, please refer to the schedule of Minimum Salaries and Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel found on the United Church website.

All terms of call or appointment must be written down. While this is a covenantal relationship, it is also a legal relationship. The Record of Call or Appointment form (www.united-church.ca/forms) may be helpful in your negotiation conversation because it outlines the necessary information required for a record of call or appointment.

If your new pastoral relationship is with a candidate fulfilling their SME requirements, they are appointed to paid accountable ministry as "student supply." For compensation, follow the student salary range and details related to allowances and benefits in the salary schedule.

> "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments; let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant." (Nehemiah 1:5–6, alt.)

Unique Terms

Sometimes communities of faith and ministry personnel will come up with unique terms to address their specific circumstances. When considering unique terms, however, take care to consider the potential impacts on others of agreeing to them. Consult with the governing body as well as with the regional council support person prior to making any such commitments.

Remember, all terms, whether unique or not, must be written down and agreed to by both the community of faith and the ministry personnel without manipulation or coercion. Unique terms cannot be substituted for minimum requirements.

Here are some examples of unique terms:

- additional compensation provided not through monetary terms but through additional Sundays or time off (e.g., the Sundays off after Christmas and Easter)
- additional funds above the minimum continuing education allowance and/or additional study leave
- funds for computer/mobile phone above the minimum telephone amount

There may also be unique terms if your new pastoral relationship is a SME appointment. You may be asked to provide additional time (more than the minimum three weeks for continuing education leave) for the candidate to do part of the requirements of their theological education. For example, candidates enrolled in the Atlantic School of Theology Summer Distance program may negotiate with the community of faith to have the six weeks of the residential program all considered continuing education leave. Candidates enrolled at St. Andrew's College may negotiate to have all of their learning circle time considered continuing education leave. Candidates in the Designated Lay Ministry program may negotiate to have the four weeks of the residential learning circles considered continuing education leave. However, candidates who have completed their theological training and are serving in a SME student supply appointment as the last phase of their preparation for ordination receive the standard three weeks of continuing education leave.

Reasonable Accommodation

Sometimes the ministry personnel will have a health-related situation that will impact the way in which they perform the role. Ministry personnel are not required to provide a diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, or any other health-related information. They are required to provide information about what specific challenges they may have in performing the role and to identify how these challenges could be accommodated. At the search team's discretion, they may request that the applicant have their doctor review a position description or requirements and answer questions regarding any limitations to the performance of essential duties so that attempts at appropriate accommodation can be mutually determined.

Here are some examples:

- The ministry personnel has a service dog to assist them in their day-to-day work.
- The ministry personnel needs a two-hour break a couple of times during the working day. Together, the search team and ministry personnel discuss what a typical working day would look like that accommodates these breaks.

In these health-related situations, the community of faith must take appropriate steps to address the accessibility to the workplace, while balancing this with the needs of others. The community of faith must also consider the potential impact on others and balance the ability to accommodate the prospective ministry personnel's needs with the needs of the community of faith (e.g., members who may have allergies to dogs or parishioners who are afraid of animals may not be able to access the ministry personnel).

In other situations, the ministry personnel may make requests for consideration of terms that are specific to their unique circumstances. In your discussion with the ministry personnel, consider the following:

- What potential challenges do you see if we mutually agree to this term, and what suggestions do you have for addressing the challenges?
- Who else might be unintentionally and negatively affected by this term?
- Are there others whose input we should seek prior to making a mutual decision?

Recommendation to the Community of Faith

Once the terms have been successfully negotiated, the governing body is notified that the search team is ready to make a recommendation to the community of faith. The governing body calls a meeting of the community of faith to consider the search team's recommendation.

As a courtesy, prior to the public notice, the other ministry personnel in the community of faith and the regional council should be notified of the date of the meeting in writing.

All members of the search team should attend. All members and adherents of the community of faith are invited and encouraged to attend. Full members in the community of faith are eligible to vote on pastoral relations matters, including calls and appointments, and may extend voting privileges to adherents of the community of faith.

Meeting Agenda

- Opening prayer and call to order
- Confirmation of recording secretary for the meeting
- Introduction of the search team
- Presentation of the search team report and recommendation
- Motions and associated discussion

A search team representative should contact the ministry personnel immediately following this meeting to confirm the results. The search team takes responsibility for ensuring that the proper record of the call or appointment is sent on to the ministry personnel for completion and forwarding on to the regional council office.

> "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

The search team keeps a copy of the record of call or appointment for the team's records and the community of faith's records. The search team also provides an update in the bulletin/website for anyone who was unable to attend the meeting.

Record of Call or Appointment

The record of call or appointment is completed on ChurchHub. The Record of Call or Appointment Worksheet in *Pastoral Relations: Additional Resources for a Community of Faith* can be helpful in negotiating the terms before they are approved. Both you and the ministry personnel complete different pieces of the record of the call or appointment form in ChurchHub. Because you each have a sign-in with an individual password to access your profiles in ChurchHub, this is equivalent to a signature. Once you have approved the call or appointment and the ministry personnel have completed their section, the record of call or appointment will be reviewed and approved by the regional council. Once it is approved, it is submitted in a finalized form into the Office of Vocation database within ChurchHub and can be accessed in the future.

Support for Supervised Ministry Education Appointments

If you are making an appointment to fulfill a Supervised Ministry Education requirement, note that the Office of Vocation will provide training for the Lay Supervision Team and orientation for all learning covenant partners (candidate, educational supervisor, Lay Supervision Team). Also, the Office of Vocation, through the Candidacy Board, will appoint an educational supervisor.

Reappointment

Pastoral relationships that are appointments have a specified end date and may be renewed. A community of faith needs to make a request to the regional council to renew an appointment. A community of faith does not need to post a profile to make a request to renew an appointment.

Notifying Unsuccessful Applicants

The search team delegates one or two people to contact the other interviewees to notify them and provide them with at least one piece of constructive feedback. Taking the time to do this well demonstrates your respect for each of the interviewees.

Suggested overview of the conversation:

- Confirm who you are and why you are calling.
- Indicate that you will not proceed with a further interview.
- Give them an example of something the search team felt was a strength that they brought to their interview, or something that the search team really liked.
- Thank them sincerely for their time and their willingness to offer themselves.
- Extend best wishes to them in their continued search.

Preparing for the Start of the New Pastoral Relationship

The following are some best practices for welcoming your new ministry personnel and beginning the pastoral relationship in a positive way.

Offering Support for the Transition to the New Community

As a team, think about what you would need if you were moving to a new community and offer this information to the new ministry personnel far in advance. You can designate someone from the search team to stay connected with the ministry personnel so that they have someone to contact if they encounter hurdles.

Consider:

- Ideas about housing (if there is no manse)—rentals or real estate. Are there good realtors you can refer them to? Does anyone know of appropriate rental housing?
- If you have a manse, make sure that it is truly in move-in condition:
    - Thorough cleaning, including carpets and windows
    - When was it last painted? Does it need to be painted again or is this something that you will work out when they arrive?
    - Is everything in working order? Is anything due for an inspection (e.g., chimney/fireplace, furnace, roof)?
    - Are there working smoke and carbon dioxide detectors in appropriate areas?
    - Does anything need to be replaced?
    - Is the lawn mowed or the snow shovelled?
- School information (if there are school-aged children involved).
- Information about family physicians who are taking new patients.
- Information about local sports teams, arts and culture activities, or groups, or other community-specific information that will be helpful.
- Notice to the local Welcome Wagon or equivalent – or alternatively, put together your own “welcome wagon” basket to give them upon arrival.

Planning Orientation

Meet with the M&P Committee to set up the orientation process. A well-prepared orientation speaks volumes about how excited you are to welcome them to your community.

Consider the following as a draft list and modify it as needed:

- Tour of the building—washrooms, offices, fire exits and extinguishers, light switches, furnace and heating, etc.
- Introduction and welcome to other paid staff (ministry personnel and lay employees) and key lay people in positions of leadership
- Keys/passwords/codes to buildings and offices
- How to use the phone system including voicemail
- Access to computer and computer files (passwords, etc.)

- Location of important documents such as the historic roll, deed, minutes of meetings
- Parking (if relevant)
- Set up a time for them to meet with key people to discuss roles and how they will work together:
    - Church Administrator: What does the order of service look like? What are the timelines for the bulletin? Who edits it and who manages its content? How does the photocopier and other equipment work? Who schedules and rents meeting space? Where is the master schedule to avoid double-booking?
    - Music Director(s)/Musician(s): How are decisions made about music? What is the repertoire of the community of faith? How often will we meet to talk about worship and music?
    - Maintenance Person: What to do in an emergency (e.g., water pump breaks, furnace doesn't come on) when they are not available?
    - Treasurer/Book-keeper/Accountant: overview of roles, financial statements, and budgeting process
    - Other Ministry Personnel: What are our roles, and how will we collaborate and support each other? How often will we meet? How will we deal with conflict?
    - Chair of the Governing Body (and Committee Chairs): How does the governance structure work here? What has the role of the ministry personnel been? What do we need from each other to fulfill our respective roles?
- Introductions and tours in local hospitals and retirement and long-term care homes where they are expected to visit
- Introductions to local ministerial association
- Other things that are relevant to your context

Being a Welcoming Presence

Consider what would make you feel welcome when you arrive in a new community and move into a new home. Then do those things for the new ministry personnel. Even if the ministry personnel is not moving, you will still want offer a welcoming presence. Extend a welcome that communicates your commitment to and excitement about the pastoral relationship. How you choose to do that will be a reflection of your community of faith. Be as creative as you want to be.

Beginning the New Pastoral Relationship

As you begin your new pastoral relationship, you may want to access the resources of the United Fresh Start (https://unitedfreshstart.ca) program. Ask the regional council staff if there is a United Fresh Start facilitator available to work with your new minister and the key leaders in your community of faith in the first two years of your new pastoral relationship. It might be helpful to work through "United Fresh Start in Your Congregation," a modified version of four of the key modules of the United Fresh Start curriculum. During this beginning time, it can be helpful to work through the Exit and Entrance module and intentionally share how the transition is going for everyone.

> "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:3–11)

Follow-up Work

The work of the search team is nearly done. There is still a little bit of tidy-up left. This includes making sure you have taken steps to protect the privacy of individuals whose personal documents you now have, and taking care to debrief before you disband as a team.

Managing Personal Documents

Over the time you have been together as a search team, you have had access to information about individuals that is private and you need to continue to treat it confidentially. Now that the work is done, take care not to share any of this information outside the search team.

Here are some suggestions about the personal documents:

- Ask each member of the search team to bring all the documents together for your last time together.
- Keep one copy of the ministry personnel profile and the interview notes for each interviewee. In addition, keep the minutes of the search team, including a copy of the report and recommendations. Have one person designated to keep these items for six months, in case there are any calls from an interviewee about the process. They need to be kept in a locked filing cabinet, and then later shredded or burned.
- The documents related to the called or appointed ministry personnel have been given to the M&P Committee.

- The report and recommendation of the search team is provided to the secretary of the governing body, for inclusion in its regular documents.
- All other documents: Put all the other documents together and either shred them or burn them.

Debriefing and Disbanding

Be intentional about ending your time together as the search team, and prepare to return to your roles as members or adherents of your community of faith.

Here is a suggested process for closure:

- Meet for a meal or dessert and coffee
- Shred or burn the documents to be disposed of—as you do so, ask someone to pray for each of the people you encountered through this process
- Talk about the following (have someone record notes to pass feedback to the regional council liaison):
    - What worked well?
    - What didn’t work well?
    - What suggestions do we have?
    - What additional resources would have been helpful?
    - Other comments
- Ask each other to reflect on the following:
    - Something I learned in this process
    - Something or someone I am grateful for
    - Where I sense the presence of God most during this process
    - What I will most remember from this process
- End with a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving

Covenanting Service

With the ministry personnel, coordinate with your liaison or another representative of the regional council about the best time to hold the covenanting service.

> "What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them." (Acts 6:5–6)

A sample liturgy for recognizing the covenant that provides the foundation for the new pastoral relationship is found in the Worship section of the United Church website (www.united-church.ca/worship) under the theme Milestones and Transitions. There are also supplementary resources on the website to help worship leaders plan the whole covenanting service.

On the Journey to a New Pastoral Relationship

For assistance in your pastoral relations journey, including whom to contact, please visit www.united-church.ca/leadership/supporting-ministry/pastoral-relations. You can also contact staff in the Ministry and Employment Unit of the General Council Office.

A Prayer to Ground You During the Pastoral Relations Process

Holy One, Holy Three,
who has entered into a covenant with all of your people,
you call your disciples to follow in your way.
In times when we are not sure of the path,
give us courage.
In times when we need to discern
help us to listen to your still small voice.
In times when we are doubtful,
reassure us of your promise to never forsake us.

As we journey with you,
help us to be filled with your hope.
Amen.